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CAN CHRISTIANITY WELCOME FREEDOM OF TEACHING?

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The campaign against the teaching of evolution is a phase of a movement to identify Christianity with a dogmatic system which is being undermined by modern critical scholarship. In order to preserve religious faith, it is proposed to outlaw certain doctrines.

The leaders in the campaign fail to understand or appreciate the moral and religious value of the scientific spirit. Their program would defraud future generations of knowledge which can be attained only by free scientific research. It would be disastrous to religion itself to stand sponsor for any such repression of freedom of teaching.

The method pursued substitutes political campaigning for a dispassionate quest for the truth, and introduces malignant factors into the discussion of religion. A type of religion which distrusts candid critical inquiry betrays a suspicious weakness. A virile religion welcomes and interprets the best knowledge.

Recent attempts to outlaw the teaching of evolution have aroused widespread public attention. It is remembered that forty or fifty years ago religious sentiment had been strongly opposed to Darwinism. But it had been taken for granted by most intelligent persons that the religious world had gradually adjusted itself to the situation. It seemed that the history of theological discussion concerning the Copernican astronomy was being repeated in the case of the doctrine of evolution. Eventually religious people everywhere see the futility of opposing scientifically established positions. Since the doctrine of evolution is now almost universally accepted by biologists and historians, it was supposed that the theological battle was virtually over.

Moreover, there are in existence plenty of books which make a positive use of the conception of evolution in the service of religious belief. Henry Drummond nearly forty years ago showed that an effective evangelical appeal might be made in terms of concepts taken from biology. The title of his later Lowell Lectures—*The Ascent of Man*—suggested

a friendly connection between his Christian interpretation and the idea associated with the name of Darwin. Lyman Abbott's *The Theology of an Evolutionist*, published nearly a quarter of a century ago, was a frank attempt to deal with religious ideals in the light of the generally accepted scientific doctrine. When Christian leaders have for a generation been employing the idea of evolution surely there is nothing fatally irreligious about it!

For teachers of biology, then, when they were quietly pursuing their scientific work, to discover suddenly that they were being listed as destroyers of faith was dismaying. In fact, the ordinary university man found it difficult to take the campaign seriously. He felt toward it somewhat as he would toward a proposal to revive the persecution of witches. He could not imagine a state of mind so foreign to his own. To be told, point blank, that a teacher of science must take his cue as to what he shall teach from a theological decision rather than from scientific research seemed incredible.

Yet the incredible is actually occurring. At a time when scientists had come to feel that the older religious opposition had well-nigh disappeared, when religious leaders were incorporating evolutionary conceptions in the exposition of Christian ideals, a bill to prohibit the teaching of evolution is introduced into the legislature of the state of Kentucky, and fails of passing the house by only one vote. Moreover, the Kentucky campaign is only one instance of a nation-wide movement.

The opposition to the teaching of the doctrine of evolution has for some time been organized and vigorously pushed by the group of conservatives known popularly as "fundamentalists." In the report of a committee on schools and colleges, at the World Conference on the Fundamentals of the Faith in Philadelphia held from May 27 to June 1, 1919, the concluding paragraph reads as follows:

And finally *resolved*, That in our colleges, especially, the teaching that man has descended or ascended from brute beast is not only unsup-

ported by any unquestioned facts and therefore totally unscientific, but is a distinct denial of the Bible account of the creation of man, the beginning of sin, the plan of salvation, and the extension and triumph of the Christian religion in the world.

The doctrine of evolution appears in this report as only one of several doctrines which are declared to be subversive of Christian faith. All others are distinctively church matters, such as the inspiration of the Bible, the historicity of miracles, and the redemptive work of Christ. The fundamentalists have for several years been vigorously carrying on a campaign to rid schools under church control of all "infidel, atheistic education." The doctrine of evolution has been one of the doctrines under condemnation.

In recent months Mr. William Jennings Bryan has been advocating legislation which shall apply to public schools. The only alleged anti-religious doctrine in the fundamentalist's list which would find a place in these schools is the evolutionary hypothesis.¹ Hence this has been singled out for especial attention. At the same time the history of the movement shows that the campaign against evolution is only part of the larger program proposed by the committee on schools and colleges at the Philadelphia conference.

According to this view the employment of "higher criticism" in the study of the Bible, the denial or modification of certain doctrines hitherto prominent in evangelistic preaching, and the teaching of the doctrine of evolution are all condemned for one and the same reason. Those who hold and teach these positions are ruining the religious faith of the younger generation. Says Mr. Bryan:

Those who teach Darwinism are undermining the faith of Christians; they are raising questions about the Bible as an authoritative source of truth; they are teaching materialistic views that rob the life of the young of spiritual values. . . . A teacher might just as well write over the door of his room, "Leave Christianity behind you, all ye who enter

¹ In the Kentucky bill Darwinism was coupled with atheism and agnosticism.

here," as to ask his students to accept an hypothesis directly and irreconcilably antagonistic to the Bible.¹

The deliberate destruction of the religious faith of a generation of students is certainly not a matter to be passed over lightly. If there actually exists any such situation as is depicted by those engaged in the present campaign against higher criticism and evolution, it demands the serious attention of all high-minded citizens. In the absence of more definite knowledge on the subject, the lurid portrayal of the inroads made by "infidelity" and "atheism" into the religious beliefs of students is sure to cause widespread public concern. If public opinion can be sufficiently aroused, legislation will be introduced to put a check to the alleged irreligious influences in our schools. The fact that when the matter was brought to a vote in the Kentucky House of Representatives, restrictive legislation failed by only one vote shows what may happen if people generally shall come to believe that the contentions of the fundamentalists are justified.

Moreover, such an attempt as that just made in Kentucky is probably entirely constitutional. The article in this issue of the *Journal of Religion* by Mr. Zollmann indicates clearly that the influence of the Christian religion is distinctly encouraged and sanctioned in constitutional and legal pronouncements. Mr. Bryan makes a telling point when he insists that after Christian people have consented to the elimination of all positive religious instruction from the public schools it is intolerable that this situation should be used to permit a definitely anti-religious propaganda in the schools. Says he:

The Bible has in many places been excluded from the schools on the ground that religion should not be taught by those paid by public taxa-

¹ Citations taken from an article by Mr. Bryan in the *New York Times*, February 26, 1922. Compare the report of the committee on schools and colleges at the Philadelphia Conference, in which it is stated that, "Unfortunately most schools of this class profess to be Christian, but they teach doctrines concerning the Word of God, the person and work of Christ, and the origin of the human race which are contrary to the teachings of the Bible and destructive of Christian faith and morals."

tion. If this doctrine is sound, what right have the enemies of religion to teach irreligion in the public schools? If the Bible cannot be taught, why should Christian taxpayers permit the teaching of guesses that make the Bible a lie?*

To one who has been accustomed to scientific methods of reaching conclusions, the presuppositions and implications of this attack on evolution are at first sight ridiculous. There is a strong temptation to laugh the whole procedure down. There are plenty of sincere Christian teachers deeply concerned for the religious welfare of the students under their charge, who are employing critical methods of studying the Bible, and who are sympathetically in touch with the developments of science. For such men suddenly to find themselves called "infidels" and "enemies of religion" is bewildering. It seems so absurd that the first impulse is to regard it as a huge joke. Moreover, the naïveté of the fundamentalists when they touch the content of science would be amusing if it were not accompanied by so evident a moral passion. But to treat this reactionary movement with ridicule will certainly not help matters. The advocates of placing restrictions on freedom of teaching in the interests of religion are in deadly earnest. They feel themselves to be the representatives of a holy cause. Any ridicule of their contentions is regarded by them as simply one more evidence of a ribald spirit of irreligion which must be extirpated.

It must be frankly recognized that a profound concern for the religious welfare of students is an honorable attitude. Such a concern will rightly command the approval of the vast majority of people. If it should be made to appear that the teachers in our schools are less concerned over this matter than are the fundamentalists, popular sentiment would be likely to support the fundamentalists whenever the matter is brought to an issue. As against a widespread emotional demand for "loyalty," mere pleas for "freedom of speech" have

* Article in the *New York Times*.

little weight. We have the experience of the war too recently in mind to cherish any illusions on that point. If it shall come to be generally believed that freedom of teaching in the colleges breaks down the morale of the students, public sentiment will ardently back up movements for a religious control of teaching. The teachers in our schools should not forget that they are actually being called to account by this movement. For the present, popular sentiment is in favor of permitting them to prove by the outcome that the existing freedom is good in its results. But eventually the challenge must be met. Doubtless the campaign will be immediately effective in creating a greater sensitiveness on the subject. Already, I am informed, heads of schools seeking teachers of science are generally making definite inquiries concerning the religious character and attitude of candidates. This awakening of a sense of responsibility will be welcomed by all who have the cause of the spiritual life at heart.

But when all this is recognized, the fact remains that the method proposed by the fundamentalists and advocated by Mr. Bryan is so disastrous to spiritual interests that it must be resisted by all who have the real welfare of humanity at heart. It proposes to substitute for the method of free research the method of prescribing by law what shall be taught in educational institutions. Such a proposal would mean that future generations would be defrauded of the discoveries which may be made if men are free to search for the truth. Said Froude:

If medicine had been regulated three hundred years ago by Act of Parliament; if there had been Thirty-Nine Articles of Physic, and every licensed practitioner had been compelled, under pains and penalties, to compound his drugs by the prescriptions of Henry the Eighth's physician, Dr. Butts, it is easy to conjecture in what state of health the people of this country would at present be found.¹

Equally, if biologists be compelled by law, under pains and penalties, to teach only what is demanded by the group repre-

¹ Quoted in *Painted Windows*, by A Gentleman with a Duster, p. 198.

sented by Mr. Bryan, it is easy to conjecture the ultimate outcome so far as real knowledge is concerned. In view of the fact that the intelligent understanding of the problems of medicine today is so closely related to biological research, and the further fact that such research involves the recognition of an intimate interrelationship between the vital processes in man and those in animals, it is not saying too much to declare that such a bill as that happily defeated in Kentucky is virtually a conspiracy to defraud future generations of the biological knowledge which should be rightly theirs. Its proponents belong in the same class as those who formerly opposed vaccination and the use of anaesthetics on religious grounds.

It is here that we come upon the most appalling aspect of the campaign. The complete failure to recognize the priceless value of the scientific spirit is disheartening. Mr. Bryan's clever identification of a scientific hypothesis with a "guess" is a case in point.¹ By calling the evolutionary hypothesis concerning the origin of species a "guess," he finds it possible to ridicule the proposal that teachers should be permitted to teach irresponsible guesses when these controvert the Bible. By this gross misrepresentation he discloses a superficial flippancy which bodes ill for the spiritual honesty of the cause which he represents.

It ought to be understood by every man of intelligence today that a scientific "hypothesis" is a carefully formulated provisional statement to be used in furthering more exact research. Whenever facts are discovered which were not taken account of in the first hypothesis, the hypothesis itself is revised so as to include the new discoveries. In this way a scientific hypothesis is a method of coming closer to the truth.

¹ "The word hypothesis is a synonym used by scientists for the word guess; it is more dignified in sound and more imposing to the sight, but it has the same meaning as the old-fashioned, everyday word guess. If Darwin had described his doctrine as a guess, it would not have lived a year"—*In His Image*, p. 92.

It is at the farthest remove from an irresponsible "guess." A hypothesis is the best theory which accounts for all the facts so far as these are known. Any hypothesis is modified whenever the evidence requires it. It is called a "hypothesis" expressly to avoid dogmatically closing any investigation before all the facts are carefully considered.

The misunderstanding of the nature of a scientific hypothesis robs some contentions of any real significance. One of the most frequently used arguments is to the effect that Darwinism has already been abandoned by modern scientists. This is no news to biologists. Darwinism is simply one of the pioneer formulations of the evolutionary conception. In the fifty years or more of research since his day, the Darwinian hypothesis has, of course, been modified. Some of his suggested solutions have been found to be inadequate. But the many modifications of theory during these years have brought a steadily increasing unanimity as to the fruitfulness of the conception of evolution. To abandon Darwinism does not mean that the anti-evolutionists are right. One of the clearest statements of the precise status of the doctrine of evolution is given by Professor H. H. Newman, as follows:

The nature of the proof of organic evolution, then, is this: that using the concept of organic evolution as a working hypothesis it has been possible to rationalize and render intelligible a vast array of observed phenomena, the real facts upon which evolution rests. Thus classification (taxonomy), comparative anatomy, embryology, paleontology, zoögeography and phytogeography, serology, genetics, become consistent and orderly sciences when based upon evolutionary foundations, and when viewed in any other way they are thrown into the utmost confusion. There is no other generalization known to man which is of the least value in giving these bodies of fact any sort of scientific coherence and unity. In other words, the working hypothesis works and is therefore acceptable as truth until overthrown by a more workable hypothesis. Not only does the hypothesis work, but, with the steady accumulation of further facts, the weight of the evidence is now so great that it overcomes all intelligent opposition by its sheer mass. There

are no rival hypotheses except the outworn and completely refuted idea of special creation, now retained only by the ignorant, the dogmatic, and the prejudiced.¹

Anyone familiar with the work of scientists at first hand knows that the scientific attitude involves a humility in the face of the facts which prevents premature dogmatism. The address of Professor William Bateson at Toronto in December, 1921, is being quoted—in spots—by the anti-evolutionists; for Professor Bateson frankly admitted that nothing is yet *scientifically known* concerning the origin of species. This seems, at first glance, like a confirmation of the statement that evolutionists are simply engaged in guessing; and it is being thus used by the fundamentalists. It rhymes well with their other citations from scientists to the effect that Darwinism is now discredited. But the concluding paragraph of Professor Bateson's address deserves attention; for it shows how far removed is his attitude of scientific honesty from the dogmatic attitude of anti-evolutionists. Said he:

I have put to you very frankly the considerations which have made us agnostic as to the actual mode and processes of evolution. When such confessions are made the enemies of science see their chance. If we cannot declare here and now how species arose, they will obligingly offer us solutions with which obscurantism is satisfied. Let us then proclaim in precise and unmistakable language that our faith in evolution is unshaken. Every available line of argument converges on this inevitable conclusion. The obscurantist has nothing to suggest which is worth a moment's attention. The difficulties which weigh upon the professional biologist need not trouble the layman. Our doubts are not as to the reality or truth of evolution, but as to the origin of species, a technical, almost domestic problem. Any day that mystery may be solved. The discoveries of the last twenty-five years enable us for the first time to discuss these questions intelligently and on a basis of fact. That synthesis will follow on an analysis we do not and cannot doubt.²

In other words, the hypothesis of evolution is an indispensable instrument for scientific research; although no one

¹ *Readings in Evolution, Genetics, and Eugenics*, p. 59.

² *Science*, January 20, 1922, p. 61.

is yet in a position to declare finally just what is the exact process by which new species arise. Scientists today await the detailed researches of scientists in the future in order to construct a theory which shall account for all the facts in detail.

There is in this scientific attitude something so fine in its spirit of humility and devotion that it should be welcomed by religion. To be willing to follow the leading of the facts when these have been surely identified, to trust to the co-operative labors of scientists everywhere to contribute to a constantly growing knowledge of the world in which we live, to use hypotheses in so honest a way as to provide for their constant modification in the interests of truth—all this is what we sorely need to save us from faddists and undisciplined enthusiasts. And this Mr. Bryan caricatures as an irresponsible attitude in which a “guess” is made supreme! It bodes ill for a religion if its advocates are incapable of appreciating the spiritual value of scientific honesty. This has been caustically expressed by President Hopkins of Dartmouth College in the following words:

The minute that education becomes something besides a sincere and open-minded search for the truth it has become a pernicious and demoralizing influence rather than an aid to society and an improver of civilization. . . . If the spirit of propaganda is to be enshrined above that of the spirit of truth, the master of lies is going to be given a considerably greater prestige in the world than he has had before even, and this will be at the expense of the cause of Him who said: “Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”¹

The underlying weakness of the attempt to protect religion by prescribing what shall be taught is readily exposed. Every genuinely religious man, of course, wants the truth taught. But how shall we determine what is the truth? Manifestly, *if one is compelled beforehand to affirm only one of two different hypotheses, he can never really determine which of the two is true.*

¹ Reply to a letter sent out by the Committee on Baptist Fundamentals, *New York Times*, February 17, 1922.

If it should chance that falsehood is embodied in the prescribed hypothesis, there would be no opportunity for a *religious* man (if religion means enforced adherence to the prescribed view) to discover the truth. The theological opponents of the Copernican theory deprived *religion* of the opportunity to prove that it prized truth-seeking more than dogmatic compulsion.

To one who has the scientific temper, such a proposal as that made in Kentucky argues a suspicious weakness. If religion is in such a bad case that it cannot hold its own in a free discussion, there must be something fatally wrong about it. The campaign against the teaching of evolution will be sure to create in the minds of scientists a feeling of suspicion and hostility toward a religion which betrays such a lack of trust in the ability of truth to vindicate itself. Thus instead of winning teachers of science to a more sympathetic attitude toward religion, it is bound to have the precise opposite result. Indeed, the animus exhibited in typical controversial utterances, the inability or the unwillingness to debate fairly, the resort to ridicule, the calling of unpleasant names—these go far to make extremely difficult the co-operation of a man of reverent scientific spirit with a type of religion which vilifies and misrepresents. And when it is proposed to incorporate this purpose into law and to enforce the law by penalties, one is appalled at the disastrous results to religion itself. If the teaching of religion can be secured only by threats, where is its spiritual power?

Those who know and love historic Christianity must enter a protest against this movement in the name of Christianity itself. To restrict Christianity to the *ideas* contained in the Bible is to substitute for real Christianity the scribism which Jesus and Paul repudiated. That the great religious *ideals* so potently set forth in the Bible are central in Christian faith no one denies or wishes to deny. But even the most rigid literalist recognizes that there are customs and ideas in the

Bible which were appropriate to a certain stage of development, but which would have little or no meaning today. The exact reproduction of the system of sacrifice commanded in the Old Testament would be everywhere recognized as unwise and unnecessary. Few Christian communities today would venture to put unto practice the injunction of the apostle Paul that women should keep silence in the churches. Even Mr. Bryan probably accepts the Copernican astronomy without suffering shipwreck of his faith. The plain fact is that historic Christianity has been so creatively vital that it has been able in the past to make such modifications in traditional doctrines and practices as shall be necessary in order to continue to be a vital force in the ever-enlarging knowledge of men. For any group of men to call a halt to this century-long characteristic of Christianity is to misread our religious history.

The Christian ministry has in the past been considered a learned profession. Our forefathers gloried in the fusion of faith and knowledge. The theological textbooks of former centuries were veritable compendiums of universal knowledge. The promotion of higher education, until very recently, was almost entirely due to the initiative of the Christian church. The leaders of Christian thought enjoyed the hearty respect of all intelligent men. Those who have in mind this noble history of Christianity, and who seek to continue this cordial relationship between religion and education, are sick at heart to find that would-be leaders of religious thought today are so devoid of any appreciation of this aspect of our traditional faith. Have we fallen so low that religion shall appear as an enemy of education? If Christianity is so presented as to alienate thoughtful scholars, those who so present it have betrayed the cause. When Christian faith suffused the best learning with its power it was the supreme influence in the world. Those who would welcome freedom of research and teaching in the name of Christianity are the true representa-

tives of this noble inheritance. Those who distrust science and seek to dominate it by threats and penalties are enemies of Christianity as well as of science. They would strip off the garment of light which has attracted the love and trust of the world, and would dress religion up in a policeman's uniform, with the club of legal penalties in plain sight to intimidate.

Mr. Bryan disclaims all intention of coercing belief. He insists that those who want the doctrine of evolution taught have a perfect right to found schools where their pet doctrine may be taught. But he assumes that Christians do not want evolution taught, and that it is wronging these Christians to permit it to be taught. He entirely overlooks the fact that most Christians *want the truth-seeking spirit to prevail in education*. For Christians to demand that fixed dogma shall be taught rather than that an honest quest for the truth shall be encouraged would lead to intolerable difficulties. Among the various branches of Christianity, which one is to be singled out as right when they disagree? Is it not rather in accordance with the spirit of historical Christianity to be eager to share so completely in the best learning of its day as to be able to correct imperfect theological opinions when correction proves to be necessary in the interests of the truth? Everyone really wants to know the truth about the origin of the human species. Is there any way in which to find out the truth except by the patient research of scientific specialists? Was there any other way in which to ascertain whether the Copernican astronomy was true or false? Shall men, in the name of Christian loyalty, be permitted to initiate a policy of repression the purpose of which is to discourage that very process of scientific research by which alone the truth can be established? It should be made clear that the protest against such a policy comes not simply from scientists (who might conceivably be discounted on the hypothesis or "guess" that they are irreligious) but from those who are ardent Christians, and who believe that Chris-

tianity in the future as it has done in the past will welcome as part and parcel of religion itself the scientific spirit of loyalty—a spirit which forbids any cheap and easy way of being satisfied with doctrines, but which would make the attaining of the truth a constant exercise of the spiritual life.

The method proposed by the fundamentalists is that of outlawing everything which raises critical questions concerning the traditional beliefs. The word “authority” has a foremost place in their conception of religious faith. Our beliefs are represented as ideas which are furnished to us by divine authority, and which we are under obligation to accept because they are thus prescribed. Anything which tends to weaken or destroy this conception of authority is denounced as being irreligious. Now the ominous fact faces us that the development of modern education has introduced a different method—that of discovering the truth by careful critical investigation. And such investigation inevitably leads to revisions of opinions previously held. This is just as true in the realm of opinions about religious matters as anywhere else. In so far as the methods of study now approved in colleges and universities are seriously used, students are sure to be led to a critical re-examination of the opinions with which they came to college. And this means substituting the method of critical inquiry for the method of “accepting” ready-made doctrines.

The fundamentalists propose to outlaw this method of education. They insist that the conception of accepting beliefs on the basis of authority shall be preserved. The gist of the argument against evolution is that it is contrary to what the Bible teaches. Consequently, in the interests of religious faith, teachers must be restrained from teaching anything contrary to the Bible.

Now it must be admitted that a person who is prepared *honestly* to submit every decision to the authority of the Bible is apparently ready for aggressive Christian service. The devo-

tion and zeal of such persons are evident. They often exhibit an ardor which, superficially regarded, seems more religious than the more modest attitude of an inquirer. But the fatal limitation of this way of attaining a unified consciousness is that it involves a cruel attitude of dogmatism toward those who cannot honestly take that position. When an authoritarian meets a person who has inner difficulties about reaching his own conclusions, he has no proposal save the necessity of submitting to authority. An appeal to authority, however, in the last resort is an appeal to force. If a person will not voluntarily yield to authority, he must be *made* to yield. There is thus no absurdity seen in a proposal to hold over the head of any teacher of biology the legal penalty of a fine of five thousand dollars and a year's imprisonment if the result of his teaching is to impair the hold of a certain dogma of religious authority on students. The question may be fairly asked whether a religious policy whose final appeal is force deserves the name Christian at all. There are those of us who believe that the last word in Christian devotion is love rather than legal coercion. The most painful thing about the attitude of authoritarian zealots is their conspicuous lack of Christian love. They prefer the sound of trumpets and the clash of arms to the less conspicuous methods of love. They draw their analogies from the military world rather than from the ministry of Jesus.

Happily, the days are past when coercion in religion could be carried to its logical conclusion of physical torture and even death. But it is possible to outlaw certain teachings if popular sentiment demands it. Therefore the effort is being made to secure a majority who will vote to exclude from teaching positions those who do not bow to the authority proclaimed by the fundamentalists. The campaign thus inevitably takes the form of political agitation, either in the state at large, as in Kentucky, or within the various religious denominations, as is the case with the Baptists and the Disciples. But political

agitation has its great spiritual dangers. The supreme aim is to get a majority vote. The popular orator comes to the front. The irresponsible spreading of discreditable rumors concerning the other party is encouraged, until the "campaign lie" has come to be a regular feature of our politics. Clever debate takes the place of reverent search for the truth. Partisan-ship rather than carefully thought-out patriotism is promoted. All these evils, so common in secular politics, are being introduced into the realm of religion by the fundamentalists. There is real danger lest thousands of men shall be led to suppose that they are experiencing a religious consecration when in fact they are only responding emotionally to the crowd-psychology used so successfully by all demagogues.

All this is involved in the attempt to secure religious uniformity by coercion. And if the attempt should succeed, it would compel numbers of conscientious disciples of Christ to endure the stigma of being classed as irreligious. Surely no one seriously desires such an outcome.

To those who know both in their own experience and by their observation of others that a devout Christian faith is entirely compatible with an acceptance of the principles of higher criticism and with a cordial attitude toward the findings of modern biologists, it seems like nothing less than a tragedy that a needless burden of anxiety should be laid on the students and teachers in our schools and colleges. There is no desire on the part of the modern teacher to "indoctrinate" a student. The aim of education is to develop the capacity to discover the truth. The only possible adverse criticism of religion would be directed against a kind of religion which resists the truth. The effort is to introduce students to a method of critical inquiry which will lead them to the formation of conclusions on the basis of a careful study of the facts.

So far as this attitude is concerned with religion, it will of course lead the student to ask critical questions concerning his religious beliefs. It will almost certainly lead to a discovery

of the formidable difficulties in the way of holding certain conceptions of biblical authority—conceptions which are justified only by the quoting of a few proof-texts, and which cannot for a moment stand on the basis of an examination of the facts. But it leads also to large and inspiring views of religion and challenges the honest inquirer to face the question of his own personal loyalty to the ends which religion promotes.

When it is discovered that religious faith does not stand or fall with the affirmation or the rejection of certain arbitrary doctrines, a new sense of confidence comes. Then the teacher with the scientific spirit trusts the inherent power of the ideals of the Bible and the gospel of Jesus to bring their own convincing message. The student is led to incorporate these ideals in his philosophy of life because he learns to love them, not because he is commanded to “accept” them on the basis of authority. Religious consecration is brought about with the consciousness of entire freedom. The way is open for modifications of religious beliefs whenever these seem to be required by the facts. The analogy between scientific processes and the gradual development of religious beliefs is a potent means of steadying the religious life of many students today, who would be only bewildered if they were confronted point blank with the alternative of “accepting” or “rejecting” a theology which seemed to them questionable. If a student knows that he can take all the time he needs to work out his religious questions, but that while he is working them out he ought to be practicing the best kind of religious faith which he can honestly entertain, the way is open for a wholesome growth into a richer and larger knowledge.

The present ferment in religious thinking will prove to be a mighty influence in turning the attention of men to religion, if it is not transformed into an occasion for inquisition. Indeed, the campaign against evolution seems to be having an effect quite different from that intended by Mr. Bryan. Thousands of people, who would otherwise have remained apathetic, are

being stirred up to discover what it is all about. A remarkable movement of popular education is going on. It is to be hoped that those who now enjoy complete freedom of teaching will seize the opportunity to indicate clearly that Christian faith has no need to fear critical investigation. In past centuries Christianity has had an enviable reputation as a supporter of the best learning. We cannot consent that this reputation shall be lost, as it will be lost if the reactionary movement is permitted to go unchallenged. Many of the most prolific movements in the history of the church have grown out of dissent from an authoritatively fixed theology. Freedom is always creative. When religious beliefs have to be enforced by law or compelled by assent to "authority" or made dominant by political scheming, it is a sure sign that that kind of religion has lost its spiritual power. In the interest of the vitality of Christian faith, freedom of investigation and freedom of teaching should be advocated by all who really believe that religious faith should *seek the truth* always and under all circumstances.